

### What is Transition?

“Transition Services” as defined in both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1997 Amendments and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, means “a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that...

- is designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated and/or supported employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living services, or community participation;
- is based upon the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests; and
- includes -
  - instruction,
  - related services,
  - community experiences,
  - development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and, if appropriate
  - acquisition of daily living skills, and
  - functional vocational evaluation”

With the 1997 IDEA Amendments, the primary focus of IDEA was not only to ensure that children/youth with disabilities have access to a free, appropriate public education, but also to improve results and post-school outcomes for all children/youth with disabilities.

As a result, the IDEA 1997 Amendments included the following transition related requirements:

- **“Beginning at age 14 and younger if appropriate, and updated annually, each student’s IEP must include.....a statement of the transition service needs of the student under the applicable components of the student’s IEP that focuses on the student’s courses of study...”**
- **“Beginning at age 16 (or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team), each student’s IEP must include...a statement of needed transition services for the student, including, if appropriate a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages.”**

Simply put, beginning at age 14, the IEP team will need to determine courses of study and other educational experiences, based upon the student’s interests and goals, that will assist the student in transitioning from school to adult life.

## Transition Overview

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Although a student's goals may change as they approach graduation, selecting classes that are meaningful to the student and relevant to what they want to do upon graduation, may not only improve student's post-school outcomes; but also help to reduce the student's chances of dropping out of school.

At age 16, the transition requirements indicate that the IEP team is required to identify needed transition services in specific areas related to the student's preferences and interests.

In order to effectively identify and plan for these transition services, the IEP team is required to invite representatives from any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing and/or paying for services, to be a part of the transition planning process. This requirement places a major focus on coordinating services and making linkages between the student, the local school district and other adult service agencies prior to the student's graduation or exit from school.

It is clear that the provision of transition services as defined by both IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act, focus on the student's interests and post-school goals. The student and their vision for the future is what drives the transition process! Since students will be able to access services through adult service agencies and programs long after they graduate from high school, and the focus of transition planning is on the student's future, early involvement of outside agencies seem crucial to effective transition planning. Both IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act strongly support the concept that linkages to adult service agencies prior to graduation will not only help to minimize gaps and delays from school to post-school activities, but will also significantly improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.

### Who May Receive Transition Services?

**Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, students who have one of the disabilities listed in the statute (mental retardation, hearing impairments, including deafness, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, and learning disabilities); **and** requires special education services as a result, are entitled to receive transition services from the local education agency(school).

**Under Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act 1998 Amendments**, any student with a disability who receives special education services or who is enrolled in regular classes, and who may need VR services to prepare for, obtain or maintain employment may be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation.

## Transition Overview

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Students with disabilities are **eligible** for VR services if they meet the following three criteria:

- **Student has a physical, learning, or mental impairment;**
- **which substantially limits their ability to be employed; and**
- **the student requires VR services to prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment.**

It is noted that a student who has a disability or is blind and is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI):

...is considered to be an individual with a significant disability and is presumed eligible for VR services,

...provided that the student intends to achieve an employment outcome consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of the student,

...unless VR can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that such student is incapable of benefiting in terms of an employment outcome from VR services due to the severity of the student's disability.

### **State Level Guidelines for Providing Joint Transition Services?**

In much the same way that transition requirements in the IDEA 1997 Amendments emphasize interagency coordination, responsibilities, and linkages between non-educational public agencies and state/local education agencies in the IEP transition planning process; the 1998 Amendments to Title I of the Rehabilitation Act also emphasize vocational rehabilitation coordination and collaboration with education officials in the area of transition planning for students with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act 1998 Amendments also go a step further in requiring Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) state plans to outline a procedure for coordination between VR and education officials that facilitates the transition of students with disabilities from special education services to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services; and requires VR to develop statewide interagency agreements to clarify roles and responsibilities.

In response to these federal guidelines, Missouri has developed the following statewide agreements regarding the partnering of agencies to provide transition services to students with disabilities in Missouri's schools:

- **Joint Memorandum of Understanding Regarding VR Participation in Transition**

## Transition Overview

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- **Cooperative Work Experience Program (COOP) Agreement**
- **Community Rehabilitation Program/Supported Employment Service Provider Transition Assessment Agreement**

It is noted that there may also be additional statewide agreements between various agencies regarding the provision of services to students with disabilities, however for the purpose of this guide we have chosen to highlight only those agreements that involve direct partnership between Vocational Rehabilitation, Vocational and Adult Education, and Special Education. Many of the transition services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation at the local level are driven by the guidance outlined in these agreements. Copies are provided in the back of this section.

### **The Transition Concept**

[The information below has been reprinted directly from IDEA '97 Transition Requirements: A Guide, Storms, O'Leary, and Williams:

The concept of transition is simple and generally has three major components:

- 1) Coach every student, along with his or her family, to think about goals for life after high school and to develop a long-range plan to get there.
- 2) Design the high school experience to ensure that the student gains the skills and competencies needed to achieve his or her desired post-school goals.
- 3) Identify and link students and families to any needed post-school services, supports or programs before the student exits the school system.

The student's high school program should thoroughly prepare him or her for achieving his or her desired post-school goals. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the legal document reflecting the commitment made by the educational agency to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) designed to meet the unique needs of the child with a disability. It should reflect the services and supports needed to assist the student gain the skills, experiences and connections to make the student's post-school goals a reality. ]

With a better understanding of transition as it applies to services for students with disabilities; transition services in the IEP may be more clearly developed, vocational rehabilitation and other adult agency's services may be more easily accessed, and partner's roles and responsibilities may be better defined/communicated, so that the student may receive the services and supports needed to "make a difference" in achieving his or her post-school goals.

### Practical Application of Secondary Transition Requirements in the IEP

The purpose of this section is to provide teachers and other individuals involved in transition planning with a step by step approach to the IEP process that focuses on the student's long range post-school goals. This section will also provide practical information and concrete examples on how to develop and write IEPs that will not only meet the transition requirements of IDEA, but most importantly, meet the needs of the students.

The information provided on the following pages regarding a five step approach to the **"IEP Process for Transition"**, has been copied directly from "IDEA '97 Transition Requirements: A Guide", Storms, O'Leary, and Williams. It not only includes the specific IDEA requirements relevant to the steps in this process, but provides a practical interpretation of those requirements as well. This information will provide educators with an opportunity to look at the IEP process from a more longitudinal point of view, focusing on where the student wants to be in the future, and develop a plan for transition services that seems more meaningful to the student.

The remainder of the information provided in this section has been copied from a working paper written by O'Leary and Collison entitled, "Transition Services-Helping Educators, Parents, and Other Stakeholders Understand: Postschool Outcomes, Course of Study, Coordinated Set of Activities". This paper contains information compiled from Transition Outcome Projects in over 14 states in the nation, that will solidify and build upon the earlier discussion regarding the IEP Process for Transition. The following transition requirements that have been evaluated to be areas of difficulty for schools and districts will be highlighted and concrete examples provided:

- **Identifying "post-school outcomes"**
- **Developing and writing a "statement of transition service needs"**
- **Developing and writing a "coordinated set of activities" within the "statement of needed transition services."**

### Missouri State Sample IPE

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